



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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1992 DUCK FALL FLIGHT FORECAST: NO MAJOR CHANGES FROM LAST YEAR

The number of ducks migrating south this fall is expected to be similar to the last two years, according to the 1992 "fall flight forecast" issued by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The 1992 projection of 62 million is based on surveys of duck breeding populations and estimates of brood production rates.

"Spring came late this year, causing many geese and some ducks to nest late or not nest at all. Although we can't improve weather conditions, we can improve habitat conditions. By continuing our efforts under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, we can restore habitat desperately needed by waterfowl," said Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner.

There is a projected increase in the fall flight of ducks in the Atlantic Flyway in 1992, while no change is expected in the Pacific, Central, and Mississippi Flyways.

Stable to lower fall flights are expected in 1992 for most goose and swan populations in North America compared to last year. Surveys of spring habitat conditions in northern Canada and Alaska suggested that goose nesting areas

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became free of snow approximately 1-3 weeks later than last year. In general, this delay in nest-site availability is expected to reduce production for most North American goose populations in 1992.

This year's index of the Atlantic Population of Canada geese is the lowest in the last 23 years and continues a downward trend in Canada goose populations in the Atlantic Flyway. The Mississippi Valley population of Canada geese is faced with the second consecutive decline since the record-high index in 1989. A reduced fall flight is expected for the Eastern Prairie Population of Canada geese, which winters near Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge. There was an unexpected decline from last year's record giant Canada goose index, but this year's is still the fourth-highest on record. Numbers of dusky Canada geese are expected to increase this fall while lesser and cackling Canada geese are projected to be equal to 1991.

The fall flight of greater white-fronted geese is expected to be equal to last year's in the Pacific Flyway. Numbers of eastern mid-continent whitefronts, wintering mostly in Louisiana, are expected to be lower than last year, while the western population index predicts a fall flight similar to last year's.

A reduced fall flight of greater snow geese is expected due to a late spring on Bylot Island, Canada, where the largest known colony nests. Numbers of lesser snow geese are also expected to be lower than last year's. The mid-continent population of lesser snow geese is expected to be lower than last year but is still the second-highest index on record. The western Central Flyway, the western Canadian arctic, and the Wrangel Island populations are expected to be average to slightly below average this year while Ross' goose populations are expected to be similar to last year's.

Both the eastern and western populations of tundra swans are expected to have fall flights equal to or slightly lower than last year's. The late spring suggests that there will be a lower than average nesting effort among swans.

The *1992 Status of Waterfowl and Fall Flight Forecast* will serve as a management document in the development of waterfowl harvest regulations for the 1992-93 hunting season.